



HISTORICAL COMMISSION AGENDA

Thursday, October 18, 2012

7:30 p.m.

City Hall

Conference Room #4

Call to Order

Roll Call

Approval of Minutes from September 20, 2012 Historic Commission Meeting

Old Business

1. Re-nominating Robert Powell and Ron Wendel to serve on the Commission for another term
2. Re-nominating Lyle Goff as Chairperson and Robert Powell as Vice Chairperson for 2013.
3. Update on the Antique Road Show
4. Update on the Coon Rapids Historical Markers
5. Update on St. Catherine's Digitization Project of the Coon Rapids Historical Commission Collection. (This project is being done by St. Catherine's with no charges to the City of Coon Rapids or the Historical Commission.)

Other Business

Adjourn



Historical Commission - Regular

Meeting Date: 10/18/2012

SUBJECT: Approval of Minutes from September 20, 2012 Historic Commission Meeting

Attachments

HistoricCommissionSeptember2012Minutes

HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 20, 2012

The September meeting of the Coon Rapids Historical Commission was brought to order by Vice Chairperson Robert Powell at 7:40 P.M. The September meeting was held in the Coon Rapids City Hall Conference Room #4.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Robert Powell, Boo Mills, Ron Wendel, Jim Marsolais, Tracy Ekberg

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lyle Goff, Jackie Dingley

1. APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 16, 2012 HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES WAS MADE BY BOO MILLS SECONDED BY JIM MARSOLAIS. The Motion Passed Unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Antique Road Show Update

Staff Liaison informed the Commission that there's not yet a definite answer from the Anoka County Historical Society at this time.

b. Update on the Coon Rapids Marker Wording

The Commission decided that the first step of this project, should be completed by this summer of 2013. It is to send the previously agreed scripts on the bronze markers to CTN Studio for their review. Then the Commission is going to approve the wording on five future Historical Markers and send those to CTN Studio for their review (WCCO Radio Tower, Minnesota Drag way, Mary T School House and two Railroad markers, one at the tussle near the Clay Hole and the other at the Northstar Station near Riverdale.)

c. Update on Receiving the Donation from the Coon Rapids Lions Club

Staff Liaison informed the Commission that the Lions Club check has been received by the Coon Rapids Finance Department. Therefore, the Finance Commission is expecting \$1,000.00 of expenditures towards this project in 2013.

d. The Digitization Project

Vice Chairperson Robert Powell and Staff Liaison met with the Professor from St. Catherine's University and it was decided that the project needs to be broken down into various steps. The first step is an organizational/identification effort. St. Catherine's asked if they could take the Coon Rapids Historical Commission's collection and work on the project at the University. AFTER DISCUSSION, A MOTION WAS MADE BY JIM MARSOLAIS SECONDED BY TRACY EKBERG TO ALLOW THE PROFESSOR AT ST. CATHERINE'S UNIVERSITY TO TAKE OUR COLLECTION FOR PHASE ONE OF THE DIGITIZATION PROGRAM AS LONG AS IT IS KEPT ON UNIVERSITY PROPERTY IN A LOCKED ROOM OF WHICH THE PROFESSOR

WOULD HAVE THE KEY. The Motion Passed Unanimously. It is important to note “St. Cate’s” is performing this activity at no charge to the city or Historic Commission.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

A MOTION WAS MADE BY JIM MARSOLAIS SECONDED BY TRACY EKBERG THAT THE COON RAPIDS HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING BE ADJOURNED AT 8:30 P.M. The Motion Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ned Storla, Staff Liaison
NS/dm



Historical Commission - Regular

4.

Meeting Date: 10/18/2012

Subject: Update on the Coon Rapids Historical Markers

From: Debbie Miller, Assessment Clerk I

INFORMATION:

Update on Coon Rapids Historical Markers

Attachments

HistoricalMarkers

WCCO RADIO TOWER

The original WCCO (Washburn Crosby Company) radio transmitter building was built in 1924. The location, which the city of Coon Rapids now encompasses, was the site of radio broadcast transmitting facilities and two aerial transmitting towers which made WCCO, at 5,000 watts of power, the largest radio station west of the Mississippi in 1925. The site, originally surrounded by farmland, is on old Highway No. 10 (now Coon Rapids Boulevard). As early as 1930 the station was sending its signal out over two 300-foot antennas as far as Honolulu, the Virgin Islands, and Mexico.

A new 50,000-watt transmitter was installed, and by September 1932 WCCO was one of the most powerful clear channel radio stations in operation in the United States. The present WCCO radio antenna in Coon Rapids was constructed in 1939, allowing the station to serve more listeners. This "vertical radiator" antenna is 654 feet in height, which is 200 feet higher than the Foshay Tower in downtown Minneapolis. The tower continues in use 24 hours a day.

WCCO celebrated its 50th anniversary on the air in 1974. The city of Coon Rapids listeners have enjoyed the benefits of having such a "good neighbor" for over 80 years. The distinction and pride felt by the members of the community in having shared in the history of such a fine communications facility is a reflection of the spirit which has resulted in a healthy growth of the city of Coon Rapids.

Photo caption: WCCO RADIO

The Coon Rapids skyline was distinguished by four WCCO transmitting towers in the mid 1930's. The first two towers were constructed in 1925 and were each 200 feet in height. The two 300-foot towers were added in the mid 1930's.

MINNESOTA DRAGWAYS

Around this park site was located the Minnesota Dragways dragstrip. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the quarter mile dragstrip were held on October 10, 1958. June 21, 1959 was the opening of the dragstrip. Every Sunday, Minnesota Dragways featured a different special program: Fuel dragsters, "funny cars", or a Super Stock Show. The facility had a public address system, asphalt roadway, restroom facilities, asphalt parking lot for 2,000 spectator cars, and asphalt race car parking area for 500 cars. The tower was equipped with the latest Chronodek timing equipment. There were steel bleachers for 4,000 fans. At the quarter mile track mark there were large colored win lights which indicated which car won the race. Hot sandwiches and many other food items were served at the concession stands.

The dragstrip drew pretty good attendance right away. John Foster was the manager and he made an effort to drum up spectator interest by bringing in "Pro" cars like: Karamesines and Maynard with the "Chizler", Lou Cangelose in the "Missouri Missile", Glenn Leasher with "Pandemonium", and others that appeared at the track.

As a part of track operation, stories and photos were sent in to Drag News, the weekly California based "Bible" of drag racing. Ron Johnson was part-time PR director for Minnesota Dragways. Ron prepared and distributed press releases to all the media outlets and did the weekly Drag News articles with pictures. He also created and distributed posters promoting future events.

Minnesota Dragways track closed in the late 70's (1977) but was a test facility for Yamaha Motorcycle Company after that. The land was later purchased by land developers for housing and a park.

SCHOOLHOUSES OWNED BY MARY TJOSVOLD

Because of her interest in historic schoolhouses, Mary Tjesvold has purchased, moved and maintained two historic schoolhouses onto her property. There are many details about these schoolhouses that are of interest to the public. She welcomes the public to open houses at various times of the year.

The white two-story building was originally used as a school house in the late 1880's in what was then Anoka Township and is now Coon Rapids in the area of Hanson Boulevard and Robinson Drive. In the early part of the last century, the building was moved and renovated into a home on the Northdale Boulevard property across from Sand Creek Park. That property was sold for development and the building would have been demolished. The seller of the property contacted the Coon Rapids Historical Commission for its assistance in preserving the old school house. Ned Storla, staff liaison to the historical commission and Coon Rapids city assessor, contacted Dr. Mary Tjosvold, founder and chief executive officer of Mary T Inc. to see if she would be interested in helping preserve the building. She was very excited about the project and planned to use the building for a meeting place and historical display.

The two story building was moved the early morning hours of November 30, 2006, to its new home on Mary T Inc. property on Xeon Boulevard north of Northdale Boulevard. At the new location, Mary T planned to use the upstairs of the 1,750 square-foot building as a meeting place, with the first floor a display area showing the history of the building. Dr. Mary Tjosvold said the historic school house will be renamed Hodson Farm after the family that purchased the old school building and turned it into a residence. This was the third building that has historic significance on the campus.

The other buildings are the former one-room school house, which Rose Camilia Williams (Tjosvold's grandmother) moved to the property in the early 1950s, and the Brick House, which is the oldest home in Coon Rapids, constructed from the bricks at the Old Brick Factory on East River Road.

Mary T. Inc. is a family owned company that manages residential and social services in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Maryland, and Arizona. Since 1976, the company has been providing programs and services to seniors, people with developmental disabilities, children and adults who are medically fragile, people with traumatic brain injuries and physical disabilities and individuals needing affordable and/or accessible rental housing.

COON RAPIDS RAILROADS COON CREEK STATION

The first railroad in Anoka County, the St. Paul and Pacific, was completed from the Twin Cities to Anoka in 1863. By December 1863 passenger trains were running from St. Paul to Manomin (Fridley) and soon after extended to Coon Creek. Trains ran backward on the return trip to Manomin, as there was no turn-around at Coon Creek. The railroad was pushed to Elk River in 1864 and reached St. Cloud and Sauk Rapids in 1866. The Coon Creek cut-off between Coon Creek and Hinckley was built in 1898-1899 by the Eastern Railway Company of Minnesota. Both lines passed into the possession of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad Company. In 1884 the St. Paul and Northern Pacific merged into the Northern Pacific. The Coon Creek cutoff was also known as the "Duluth Branch."

Traveling by train was a good deal more comfortable than traveling by stagecoach, although passengers became covered by dust and cinders. The passenger coach on the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad of the 1870's had upholstered seats, a wood-burning stove, and kerosene lamps.

The cut-off from Coon Creek Junction became a switching point which included a large freighthouse and station. Local brickyards freighted their bricks and farmers shipped cattle, potatoes, and other farm products from this point, creating a bustling center of activity.

In 1942, the railroad considered closing the station due to declining shipments. The decision was made by fate when a freight train jumped the track, crashed into the

station house, set it on fire, nearly killing the telegraph operator. The station was a total loss.

COON RAPIDS RAILROADS **NORTHSTAR RAIL RIVERDALE STATION**

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The Northstar Corridor Development Authority (NCDA) launched Northstar Commuter Rail in November 2009. The Authority had set its sights on maximizing the line's assets and extending the rail service to St. Cloud when the timing was right.

In January 2006, Gov. Tim Pawlenty announced bonding recommendations which included \$60 million for Northstar which was the final funding needed from the state for Northstar's construction. This funding allowed the state to apply for 50% federal matching funds from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). On June 1, 2006 Gov.

Pawlenty signed the 2006 bonding bill which authorized \$60 million in bonding authority for construction of Northstar Commuter Rail.

In January of 2007, NCDA finalized the steps of the Northstar project to secure a 50% funding match from the federal government. The year 2007 saw the completion of utility relocation for a four-block extension of the Hiawatha Light Rail Line to connect with Northstar in downtown Minneapolis. The location of the link between Northstar Rail Line and Hiawatha Light Rail Line is at Target Center. Northstar arranged with Minnesota Twins baseball team management and Metro Transit to provide rail service to and from most home Minnesota Twins games. Construction of stations and park-and-ride lots for the 40-mile Northstar Line in Big Lake, Elk River, Anoka, Coon Rapids/Northtown, and later Fridley were begun. Construction of a vehicle maintenance facility in Big Lake was also begun. Negotiations to buy five locomotives and 17 passenger train cars began.

The Northstar Commuter Rail project celebrated its final federal approval with a \$156.8 million full funding grant on December 11, 2007. Currently, there are 5 trains running every half-hour from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. going into Minneapolis (plus one train going to Big Lake) and 5 trains running every half-hour from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. going to Big Lake (plus one train going to Minneapolis).